CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 9 March 2000, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 845th plenary meeting of the Conference.

Allow me at the outset to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Borys Tarasyuk, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, who will be addressing the Conference today. Their presence among us testifies both to the abiding commitment of their Governments to our common endeavours and to the continued importance that they attach to our forum. I also have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Hofer.

It gives me much pleasure to extend a cordial welcome to the representatives of non-governmental organizations who are with us today. As you are aware, International Women's Day was celebrated yesterday, 8 March, and, to mark this event, the participants in the annual International Women's Day seminar will, in accordance with established practice, address a message to the Conference. I am certain that the Conference joins me in conveying our best wishes to all women present here today, and our appreciation for their steadfast commitment to peace and disarmament, as well as for continuing interest in our work.

Mr. PETROVSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): It is a great pleasure for me to read the following statement to the Conference on Disarmament from the annual International Women's Day seminar, which took place in Geneva on 7 and 8 March. The statement reads as follows:

"The participants in the annual International Women's Day seminar appreciate this opportunity to address you. This year's seminar, on the theme: 'The reporting of war and disarmament: the role of the media in building a culture of peace', was a timely contribution to the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The seminar explored the part played by non-governmental actors in international relations, with a special focus on the role of the media in building cultures of peace. Experience has shown that the media can play a role in fuelling conflict, through the misrepresentation of issues and history. In conflict situations, information becomes an even more valuable commodity; it can, however, also be utilized for transformative purposes and can contribute significantly towards peace-building.

"The participants consistently affirmed the need to promote reconciliation at the local level, in order to build communities living in peace. In this regard, women have demonstrated considerable leadership skills all over the world with their commitment to and capacity for the making and building of peace through regional disarmament programmes and participation in peace negotiation and reconciliation at community and national levels.

"The state of global insecurity demands a greater effort on the part of Governments to make 2000 a year in which significant impasses in disarmament are overcome. The increased used of such preventive diplomacy strategies as mediation, the

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

strengthening of democratic institutions and promotion of local and international reconciliation can only make a positive contribution towards transcending conflict and injustice. Greater efforts towards transparency will also contribute to the creation of a climate of confidence in which the crucial issue of comprehensive and general disarmament with nuclear disarmament as the key goal can be achieved. The Conference on Disarmament is the world's only forum in which such a programme of disarmament can and must be achieved.

"The seminar examined why disarmament issues and initiatives are generally under-reported in the media. In this context, the work of non-governmental organizations in educating the general public that over 30,000 nuclear weapons still exist on the planet today and continue to be invested with political legitimacy and enormous financial resources is particularly valuable. The creative use of media as an awareness-raising and educational tool will be witnessed throughout the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Women's organizations are leading that effort through inviting prominent personalities to the event, and through using technology to provide instant on-line information, as well as digital sound-bites, images and video materials for journalists.

"The participants in the seminar urge all those gathered here today to enter into the NPT Review with a new spirit of cooperation and determination to rid the world of the continuing threat - accidental or otherwise - of nuclear weapons. 'It is going to be a difficult conference', Secretary-General Kofi Annan said recently. 'We have only one Earth and we all have a responsibility for it. Usually when we talk about nuclear weapons I am reminded of an African proverb which says that the air is not ours, it is a treasure we hold in trust for future generations. And I think we should be worthy of that trust.'

"The participants in the seminar call upon the Governments of all nations to reaffirm the solemn obligations contained in article VI of the NPT. This moral and legal obligation, as the International Court of Justice concluded in 1996, is a compelling motivation to end nuclear programmes of all kinds and dismantle weapon stockpiles. A key preliminary step in this direction that would serve both to reduce the danger of purely accidental war and improve the climate for advancement is taking warheads off alert status. Effectively we are all held hostage by a permanent bomb scare because of 5,000 nuclear weapons poised on hair-trigger alert. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference paved the path towards disarmament through the package of decisions which included the Principles and Objectives document. The task of the 2000 Review Conference is to reaffirm these principles, search for ways to break the current stalemate and identify benchmarks and objectives for a more substantive approach to disarmament during the next five-year period.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

"The NPT will be undermined if the five nuclear weapon States continue to expect 182 States to fulfil their legal obligations while not really fulfilling their own. While acknowledging the reduction in numbers of nuclear weapons held in some States, the world still waits for the necessary decision to disarm and eliminate. 'Eventually' is not soon enough for an increasingly impatient majority of the world's Governments and people. The development of nuclear weapons took place under conditions of absolute secrecy, but when the people are consulted, it is shown by numerous polls that they want their Governments to give what the NPT promised - nuclear disarmament.

"The failure of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to enter into force is indeed a disappointment. Non-governmental organizations will continue to play a vital role in conducting some of the necessary public education that facilitates shifts in the political will to reach ratification. Governments must, however, provide leadership and pursue the course to which they have declared their commitment despite all other pressures. All Governments are urged to sign and ratify this important treaty.

"At the start of the new century, contemplation of the deployment of ballistic missile defence systems is a serious source of concern. Pursuing such a hostile and flawed mode of security not only contributes erroneously to already faltering disarmament efforts but also potentially violates the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. As you will recall, the 1999 annual International Women's Day seminar was devoted to the topic of the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We reaffirm the importance of exploration and use of outer space as only to be for peaceful intent and the advancement of all peoples.

"Armed conflict and the preparation for armed conflict exists in every region of the world. Inter-State and intra-State conflicts continue to generate all types of displacement of peoples, the majority of whom are women and their dependants. The Canadian Foreign Minister, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, recently commented on the dangers faced by civilians in modern armed conflict, observing that the victimization of civilians is no longer a 'tragic by-product of war, but often the principal aim.' Small arms and light weapons are the main tools of this victimization. In 1997 the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms found that almost every part of the United Nations is dealing with the consequences of recent armed conflicts fought mostly with small arms and light weapons. Controlling the spread of small arms is a challenge that all Governments must embrace if cultures of violence are to be changed.

"The envisaged United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects will be a litmus test of Governments' commitment to addressing the illicit supply of and demand for these weapons. An estimated 5,000 illicit arms traffickers reap large profits, capitalizing on global conflict and instability. Stringent efforts also need to be directed towards the manufacture and supply of small

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

arms. The countries that are the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council produce about 85 per cent of the world's small arms. The participants call upon all Governments to commit themselves to developing an international legal framework that acts to stem this deadly trade.

"Finally, we urge the Conference on Disarmament to work towards procedural change to provide for greater non-governmental organization participation. The Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines is a fine example of the capacity of non-governmental organizations to produce global results in the pursuit of disarmament. Momentum is growing on banning the use of child soldiers, curbing illicit small-arms proliferation and the establishment of an international criminal court. Creating groundswells of support is a key facet of the work of non-governmental organizations, and public support is crucial in the implementation of a complete disarmament agenda. Non-governmental organizations can contribute a diverse range of expertise and analysis to the Conference. The expansion of the Conference to include the voices of civil society represents an important next step in the evolution of this unique forum.

"In a world increasingly interconnected by the forces and impulses of globalization, comprehensive security derives its strength from our recognition of linkages with one another as people and nations. Our common security is contingent on our ability to work with one another for mutual aspirations. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to set a work programme for the year as well as to start work on already agreed objectives such as the long overdue negotiations on the prohibition and production of fissile materials for weapons purposes.

"The participants in the annual International Women's Day seminar wish you well in your work and assure you of their full support in the steps you take towards comprehensive disarmament."

The PRESIDENT: I thank Mr. Petrovsky for reading out the message of the seminar. I now give the floor to the Coordinator of the Group of 21, Ambassador Antonio de Icaza of Mexico.

Mr. DE ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of the delegations which are members of the Group of 21, I wish to express our appreciation for the message which we have just heard, sent on the occasion of International Women's Day to the Conference on Disarmament by the community of women's non-governmental organizations committed to peace and disarmament.

Our group also wishes to express its appreciation for the continued interest in and invaluable support for the work of the Conference on Disarmament on the part of women's

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

non-governmental organizations. Their fruitful contributions to the cause of general and complete disarmament and their committed action in support of peace and international security are a great source of encouragement to us in our continued efforts towards bringing about a weapons-free world.

The Group of 21 is convinced that the active participation of women in the international peace movement is a reflection of the genuine interest of more than half of the world's population in making the goal of general and complete disarmament a reality and in guaranteeing a peaceful future for mankind. We are honoured to congratulate all women worldwide who are committed to this goal.

We would also like to congratulate the distinguished women colleagues who are the heads or members of delegations participating in the Conference on Disarmament and those staff members in the secretariat and interpretation booths who are supporting our work and facilitating our communications.

Ms. HOUBEN-VAN NOTTEN (Netherlands): Mr. President, before turning to my statement with regard to Women's Day, let me first welcome here today, on behalf of the Western Group, Minister Vollebaek of Norway and Minister Tarasyuk of Ukraine. It is an honour to have them here and we look forward to their statements.

With regard to International Women's Day, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Western Group, to the representatives of the women's international organizations who have joined the Conference on Disarmament today and who come here every year to demonstrate their commitment to the Conference and the issues of disarmament. On behalf of the Western Group, I would also like to thank the Women for Peace Working Group for the message of encouragement contained in their address.

We listened with great interest. Once more it was brought to our attention that our Conference does not work in a vacuum - even though we like to keep our curtains closed here, we are not a world in itself: but we serve the world. We are aware of the expectations of the world community. The absence of an agreement on a work programme in the Conference on Disarmament should not be interpreted as lack of concern on the part of the Western Group and other delegations in this room about the issues that need to be addressed. The Western Group in fact believes that there are issues on the disarmament calendar, such as negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which need to be addressed with the highest priority.

I can assure our visitors today that we feel encouraged by their presence here. We would like to pay tribute to them for promoting the cause of disarmament and its importance for international peace and security.

I would also like to take the floor on behalf of another group, a cross-regional group in the Conference on Disarmament, which does not officially exist, but which is very present. It is

(Ms. Houben-van Notten, Netherlands)

the group of women in the Conference on Disarmament. Yesterday we came together to celebrate Women's Day, and more importantly, to discuss our work in the Conference. While I do not want to present you with the conclusions of our deliberations, I would like to put forward the idea, that next year the women of the Conference read out a statement of their own on the occasion of Women's Day.

I would like to end with a quotation from Joseph Conrad, which applies to women, especially to women in the Conference on Disarmament. "Being a woman is a terribly difficult task, particularly since it consists mainly of dealing with men."

Mr. SIDOROV (Russian Federation) (translated from Russian): On behalf of the Eastern European Group, allow me to convey heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to our women colleagues in the Conference on Disarmament, ambassadors and members of delegations, as well as to our women colleagues in the secretariat, on the occasion of International Women's Day. On behalf of the delegations which are members of the Eastern European Group, I wish to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Petrovsky, for reading out the message from the seminar of non-governmental organizations held on the occasion of International Women's Day. On behalf of the members of our Group, may I wish the representations of those women's non-governmental organizations which have shown unflagging interest in our work good health, happiness and prosperity

Mr. HU (China) (translated from Chinese): It gives me great pleasure to express, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, warm congratulations to all women on the occasion of International Women's Day. In particular, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations and sincere greetings to our women colleagues in all missions, to all the women sitting now in the gallery and all the very helpful women staff of the Conference Secretariat.

The wheels of history are pushed forward by the joint efforts of men and women. Yet women and children have always been the main victims of the countless wars over the course of history. Naturally, women all over the world desire peace and cherish security, stability and happiness in life. That is why they have been making unremitting efforts in many areas and many fields, including those of international arms control and disarmament.

The Chinese delegation highly respects and deeply appreciates the interest in and support for the work of the Conference on Disarmament on the part of women everywhere and of various international women's organizations. I have come to know some women activists, both government officials and members of non-governmental organizations, who have shown deep insight in the most important and pressing issues, such as nuclear disarmament and the prevention of arms race in outer space, and have played a positive role in pursuit of these goals. The statement which we have just heard from the annual International Women's Day seminar to the Conference on Disarmament has amply demonstrated that point.

It should also be noted that the women non-governmental organizations devoted to awareness-raising, educational and promotional work in the field of arms control and

(Mr. Hu, China)

disarmament are gathering strength and expanding their influence. These organizations have not only brought new vitality to the cause of international disarmament but have also made great contributions to safeguarding international peace and security. In conclusion, we would like to convey our best wishes to all women on International Women's Day and wish them good health and happiness.

Mr. TARASYUK (Ukraine): Let me first express my sincere appreciation for the skilful manner in which the President has steered the Conference on Disarmament over the last month. I take this opportunity also to convey my best wishes to the people of Bangladesh - a country that plays an important stabilizing role in the volatile region of South Asia, where nuclear risks have still to be reduced and eliminated. Bangladesh and Ukraine, from the beginning of this year and into the next millennium, are assuming responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security as non-permanent members of the Security Council.

I would like also to pay a special tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Bensmail, and the secretariat staff for their valuable contribution to the activities of the Conference.

The message we have just heard from the international women's community proves how sensitive women - the better part of the world's population - are to the current difficulties in the disarmament process and how disturbed they are about those difficulties. Please be assured that the Government of Ukraine shares many of your concerns and is your genuine ally in moving humankind to a more secure and stable world.

The present pattern of international security is directly linked to the progress or the lack thereof in disarmament and non-proliferation. The world has entered the twenty-first century with new challenges, while it has not got rid completely of the old ones.

Ten years ago, with the end of the cold war and bloc confrontation, many sincerely hoped that these new geopolitical realities would lead to a deep re-evaluation of the global security risks, to a phased reduction in armaments and eventually to a safer and more stable world with fewer armaments stockpiles.

The beginning was quite encouraging. Negotiations between the United States and the USSR, and later the Russian Federation, continued intensively. Among the achievements in the sphere of disarmament we should mention the implementation of START I, the indefinite extension of the NPT, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its endorsement by the United Nations General Assembly and the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction.

Ukraine has also made a significant contribution to this process of disarmament. Accession to the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty in 1992, the 1992 Lisbon Protocol codifying our accession to START I, the Trilateral Statement by the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States of America of January 1994, accession to

(Mr. Tarasyuk, Ukraine)

the NPT in November 1994 and accession to the Open Skies Treaty just a week ago have considerably improved the global security environment. We fully realized that clinging to the nuclear legacy would seriously jeopardize our independence, destabilize the world order and lead to international isolation. Instead, voluntary renouncement of the world's third largest nuclear potential has brought its obvious dividends in the form of wide recognition and strengthened political and economic cooperation with the world. In doing so, we have demonstrated to the whole world community our responsibility for the maintenance of international security. This was and remains the largest investment in the process of nuclear disarmament. Presently, Ukraine is actively integrating into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures, maintains good relations with its neighbours and is an acknowledged net contributor to European security - all this achieved without any need for nuclear weapons.

Regrettably, this good example has not been followed by some other nuclear and threshold States. Progress in disarmament has been and is often now held hostage to diverging national security considerations, foreign policy ambitions, internal political debates, or confrontation between neighbouring States.

The lack of political will on the part of the leading world powers, insufficient cooperative ties among them and, as a result, underdeveloped international instruments for enforcing disarmament have led to additional negative phenomena, though against their own will. All this leads to the following:

First, some States have learned to manipulate the differences among the acknowledged nuclear powers to proceed with their nuclear programmes.

Second, the non-accession to the NPT by key States plays into the hands of individual nuclear terrorists who see more opportunities to obtain necessary technologies.

Third, the slow pace of global disarmament has given some States reasons for argument about discriminatory approaches and has pushed them openly to declare their own nuclear programmes.

It is obvious that further reductions of nuclear weapons will be possible only with the marginalization of their role in the national security considerations of the nuclear-weapon States (NWS). To date, for some countries, nuclear threat remains the only means to assert themselves and to influence international politics, because of the degraded political and economic tools. This is evidence of weakness, rather than strength. On the other hand, some later developments in Europe affecting its security have given those States reasons to place an ever greater emphasis in their national doctrines on the importance of nuclear weapons. This vicious circle can be broken only through enhanced confidence-building measures, by swiftly repairing the emerging misunderstandings and vigorously proceeding with disarmament talks.

I would single out two dimensions in the disarmament process. The first implies continued activity on the enforcement and improvement of existing international instruments in this sphere. The second envisages universal approaches, of which I will speak later.

(Mr. Tarasyuk, Ukraine)

START I is one of the pillars of disarmament. Ukraine became one of the legal successors of the former Soviet Union to this Treaty. Now the parties have embarked upon the third and final phase of reducing their strategic offensive arms, which has to be completed for Ukraine by December 2001. It should be mentioned that, as of 1 March 2000, Ukraine had eliminated 77 per cent of the total number of strategic offensive arms located on its territory. The last strategic nuclear warhead, removed from Ukrainian territory in June 1996, was dismantled at the end of 1999 in the Russian Federation under the control of Ukrainian supervisors. Now it is imperative to achieve the entry into force of START II and to resume talks on START III.

We are approaching the Sixth Review Conference of the States parties to the NPT. In this context I wish to recall a decision adopted at the previous NPT Review Conference in 1995 which stipulates the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

The Ukrainian delegation to the Conference on Disarmament has spared no effort to promote the start of these negotiations, particularly during the first Ukrainian presidency in 1998, when our Conference established an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. Since that time the Conference has been unable to resume these negotiations, and we expect that the Sixth NPT Review Conference will give its recommendations on this matter.

The lack of progress in the ratification process of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is one of the results of lack of confidence among NWS. The advantages of the Treaty consist in its ability substantively to restrain the capability of NWS in developing new types of nuclear arms, which in turn would lead to the further marginalization of their role. How can one expect progress in the non-proliferation regime without concrete steps in self-restraint as to the modernization of its nuclear capability? All countries, first of all nuclear, as well as non-nuclear signatories, and those which are still non-signatories to this Treaty and whose ratification is needed for its entry into force, should redouble their efforts to achieve this aim.

Ukraine took an active part in the consolidation of the non-proliferation regime and greater stability in South Asia by participating in the special task force established in summer 1999, thereby making a significant contribution to the reduction of the world's nuclear weapons arsenals.

Ukraine keeps a keen eye on the situation around the ABM Treaty. We believe that possible actions of a Party to the ABM Treaty in order to decrease the threat of a missile attack from a rogue State should not contradict its treaty obligations. We call upon the United States of America and Russia to find a mutually acceptable solution to this problem, to avoid a negative effect on START I and START II.

Regrettably, another important issue on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, namely negative security assurances (NSA) to non-nuclear-weapon States, remains far from being resolved in a manner acceptable to the majority of States. The decision entitled

(Mr. Tarasyuk, Ukraine)

"Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament", adopted at the above-mentioned NPT Review Conference in 1995, stipulates: "... further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument". In 1998 the Conference on Disarmament established an ad hoc committee to deal with the NSA issue, which held serious and in-depth discussions. The emergence of new States with nuclear weapon capability, as well as new strategic concepts and nuclear doctrines, deserves attentive consideration within this Ad Hoc Committee, which should be re-established at the Conference on Disarmament without further delay. In this regard, let me remind you of one precedent with direct relevance to NSA. In December 1994, Ukraine received national security assurances from all NWS in exchange for our decision to give up nuclear weapons and join the NPT.

To conclude on nuclear issues, I wish to mention the cooperation between Ukraine and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is determined by our national interests. It is based on a number of agreements, including the NPT and the Agreement between Ukraine and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the application of safeguards in connection with the NPT.

In addition, nuclear activities in Ukraine are effected in compliance with international norms and standards emanating from our commitments under the nuclear safety international conventions whose depositary is IAEA. Ukraine conducted substantial work last year preparing for the signing shortly of the Protocol Additional to the Safeguards Agreement in connection with the NPT.

In connection with the safety of nuclear facilities for peaceful purposes, I take the opportunity to mention the second donors conference to collect the rest of the funds for the "Shelter" project at the Chernobyl station, to be hosted by Germany and scheduled for the end of May 2000. I appeal to the Governments that you are representing to help complete this fund-raising effort.

Turning to the international instruments curbing other weapons of mass destruction, I would like to refer to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which Ukraine has ratified and in respect of which it strictly complies with its obligations. The President of Ukraine has adopted the Programme on CWC implementation for 1999-2008, involving over 20 State ministries and agencies in implementing the Convention. We should make this Convention a universal document. The increase to 131 in the number of States parties is an encouraging sign of progress.

Our country also recognizes the important role of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), highly appreciates the activity of the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the BWC and fully supports the appeal to complete the protocol to the BWC in 2000.

Ukraine has substantially contributed to implementing the CFE Treaty. Notwithstanding our economic problems, we have implemented our commitments under this Treaty and reduced

(Mr. Tarasyuk, Ukraine)

the number of battle tanks by 1,974, armoured combat vehicles by 1,551 and combat aircraft by 550. To date, the personnel strength of the Ukrainian armed forces has also been unprecedentedly downsized, from about 800,000 in 1991 to 400,000 at present. We believe that the CFE Treaty will continue to serve as a cornerstone of European security.

In the general context of conventional arms control and confidence-building measures, I am pleased to inform you that on 2 March 2000 the Parliament of Ukraine ratified the Open Skies Treaty, thus contributing to a safer trans-Atlantic community.

I would like especially to stress the issue of international arms transfers. The policy of Ukraine in this sphere is consistent and based on the relevant decisions, in the first place, of the United Nations Security Council. Our system of export control is strict enough to exclude any unauthorized arms sales.

I spoke explicitly on this issue at the special meeting of the United Nations Security Council in September 1999. It was clearly stated that the problem lay with the legitimate end-users, who might subsequently resell the arms to rebels. I proposed then to convene a conference of the world's biggest arms producers to seek a resolution of this problem.

Notwithstanding the varying interests and the competition of States on the arms markets, efforts could and should be made to introduce some international ethics in this sphere, a universal code of conduct on arms exports, similar to the one elaborated in the European Union. This would protect the image of falsely accused arms producers and improve the general situation with arms exports control.

The greater part of the multilateral documents mentioned in my statement were negotiated by the Conference on Disarmament or its predecessors. Although the Conference is not an assembly line for producing treaties, its primary responsibility as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiation forum consists nevertheless in negotiating treaty texts or their particular elements.

Today the Conference on Disarmament faces challenges similar to other international mechanisms in this field. This requires modifications and new approaches to become more operational and effective.

One may agree that the difficult times through which the Conference is currently passing are caused mostly by unfavourable developments well outside this hall. Still, there is an impression that the Conference is too preoccupied with these developments, while more attention could be paid to finding additional reserves within the Conference mechanism itself.

Work in the established subsidiary bodies of the Conference on Disarmament until the fulfilment of their mandates, majority voting and new broader formats of consultations could change things for the better.

(Mr. Tarasyuk, Ukraine)

The second dimension of the disarmament process that I mentioned before should remain with the United Nations. As a member of the United Nations Security Council for the years 2000-2001 and as a country that remembers the horrors of two world wars, the pain of Chernobyl and the Soviet nuclear legacy, Ukraine will strive to promote the disarmament process within this universal organization. In this regard, paramount importance attaches to the reform of the United Nations Security Council through the enlargement of its membership, review of the veto procedures and the delegation of more powers to the non-permanent members.

Moreover, Ukraine is ready to support the involvement of the Security Council in the process of the codification of international trade in small arms and control over the illegal trafficking of such weapons. The Security Council is to play a leading role in solving the problems of non-proliferation, nuclear test ban and guarantees of security to non-nuclear and threshold States.

What is most important, however, is once again the political will of the leading world powers - permanent members of the Security Council - to seek a common platform for the future of disarmament and for the future of indivisible international security.

Politicians ought to become more responsible to the people and less vulnerable to military lobby influence. They should also learn to sacrifice the national interests of their respective States for the sake of universal human interests. Actually, there will be no sacrifices, if all work together for common objectives.

In conclusion, let me wish you success in your noble and responsible task of making our planet a safer place to live, a place with fewer arms and more stability and peace.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for his important statement and for the warm words addressed to me and to my country, Bangladesh.

I have much pleasure now in inviting the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, Mr. Knut Vollebaek, to address the Conference. Mr. Minister, you have the floor.

Mr. VOLLEBAEK (Norway): May I join previous speakers in congratulating the women here in the Conference on Disarmament and representatives of the women's organizations present in this hall on the occasion of International Women's Day yesterday. Looking around in the hall, I can understand why the representative of the Netherlands chose the quotation from Joseph Conrad, but at the same time, I would like to remind us all and point to the very important work that specifically women have successfully carried out to put pressure on men to further the process of disarmament, cross-regionally and informally.

Let me also thank you, Ambassador Chowdhury, for all that you have been doing and still are doing in assisting the Conference in its efforts to reach agreement on a programme of work. That is very important.

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

Over the last decade the world has undergone dramatic political, economic and social upheavals - in many ways the political map has been redrawn. During the last five years, however, progress in disarmament has been slow, although there have been some significant breakthroughs. On the threshold of this new millennium, what could be more worth while than to make a fresh commitment to substantial disarmament and arms control?

So what are our challenges?

First of all, I sincerely hope that Ambassador Chowdhury's efforts will lead to an agreement on a programme of work which will enable this Conference to embark on real negotiations and discussions on important substantive issues.

We believe that the Conference on Disarmament must retain its role as a major disarmament forum. We have been disappointed by the lack of progress on many issues over the last couple of years. We need to avoid the impression that the Conference is becoming sidelined. I hope therefore that we can now join forces to ensure the effective operation of this body with a view to achieving concrete results.

The current situation is making great demands on the non-proliferation regime. Our efforts to revitalize nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must now be intensified and be incorporated into the foreign and security policy priorities of all countries.

At the forthcoming NPT Review Conference, the challenge will be to find ways and means to translate the agreed principles and objectives for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation into concrete action. Another challenge will be to develop new measures and initiatives that all parties can endorse. This Conference should spur us on to achieve concrete and lasting results in this regard.

The decision of the 1995 NPT Review Conference to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty indefinitely is a milestone in the efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. And this decision was made contingent on two other, equally important decisions.

The parties committed themselves to pursuing several specific principles and objectives that will promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. A crucial part of this commitment was the establishment of a strengthened review process. The review process was to be responsible for discussing how nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation can best be attained and what new measures and initiatives should be developed.

We must acknowledge, however, that the review process for the NPT has not functioned as well as we had hoped. This is partly due to underlying political realities and disagreement on a number of issues. In my view, we have not been willing to take on the responsibility for finding viable solutions on which everyone could agree.

In order to maintain the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we must revitalize the review process. We must give new momentum to this work. Practicable arrangements must be

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

developed. We must minimize the possibility of setbacks. At the same time, we must promote the implementation of decisions adopted by the review conferences. A thorough assessment of the review process is called for. Initiatives that can help get such an assessment started should be tabled at the conference.

I would like to suggest three elements that could be incorporated into a strategy for revitalizing the review process.

First, it is important to preserve the integrity of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 Review Conference. They are not up for renegotiation. Most of them have not yet been realized, with a few notable exceptions, such as the completion of the negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the IAEA additional protocol on full scope safeguards.

Second, the review process needs a mechanism that can help to transform principles and objectives into action by facilitating their implementation. A programme of action for the review process would serve such a purpose.

In addition to containing objectives that have not been realized, such a programme could include new measures and initiatives. Under a programme of action, the parties would be mandated to follow up and develop the decisions by the Review Conference for the period leading up to the next review conference.

To make this possible, each of the annual meetings of the review process should deal with a limited number of well-defined issues with a view to achieving results. The parties should undertake to deal with and further develop issues defined in a programme of action. Such a programme of action could include:

(a) Negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes;

(b) The entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty;

(c) Reviewing information on strategic nuclear arms reductions, including the START process;

(d) Transparency in relation to tactical nuclear weapons and the destruction of such weapons;

(e) The signing and ratification of the new IAEA additional protocol on full scope safeguards;

(f) Negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States that are parties to the NPT.

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

In addition, a certain part of each annual meeting should be set aside for a focused review.

Third, the review process should be extended from three to four sessions, in order to combine implementation of decisions with preparations for subsequent review conferences. This would enhance the effectiveness of the process and the prospect of achieving concrete results.

If we are to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the scope of our efforts must be wide enough to include the underlying causes of conflict and war - the most important force driving proliferation.

Thus, it is important to address regional issues in the context of non-proliferation and disarmament. The nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan in 1998 highlighted the connection between regional instability and the danger of nuclear proliferation.

The multilateral dialogue should be used to build confidence and underline that weapons of mass destruction neither protect nor promote national interests.

The security situation in the Middle East is the only regional issue addressed by the NPT to date. South Asia also gives cause for concern, however. It is important that India and Pakistan develop confidence-building measures, as provided for in the Lahore Declaration of 1999, in order to reduce tension and prevent further conflict escalation. Such measures could be followed up by consultations on elements that could be included in a separate arms control regime for the region. The nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan should serve as a strong reminder that these two countries cannot afford to allow their differences to get out of hand. Conventional conflict could contain the seeds of a larger conflagration.

We believe that the NPT should deal with regional issues in a more balanced and comprehensive way. The forthcoming Review Conference could look at a package of regional issues to be dealt with at the annual meetings. In addition to the Middle East, such a package should include South Asia and the Far East, with an emphasis on North Korea. It should also include individual countries whose status is somewhat unclear, such as Iraq. In this way, a broader regional emphasis would contribute to a more coherent strategy that would enable us to deal more forcefully with existing challenges.

I would now like to comment briefly on some of the substantive NPT-related issues.

To reduce the role of nuclear weapons, Russia and the United States must continue their efforts further to reduce their strategic arsenals. Negotiations on START III should begin as soon as possible. New strategic arms control initiatives should also be implemented. This includes the measures relating to the transparency of strategic nuclear warhead inventories, agreed on by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin at the summit in Helsinki in 1997. Such initiatives would be an important signal that the nuclear-weapon States take their responsibility for disarmament seriously.

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

The issue of tactical nuclear weapons should be given more focused attention. These weapons must not fall into the wrong hands and should therefore be subject to extensive safeguards and control. Such weapons can be rapidly redeployed and can play a destabilizing role in areas of conflict. The handling and reduction of such weapons should be part of a more comprehensive disarmament process.

Increased transparency with regard to tactical nuclear weapons could be a first step, and would be an important confidence-building measure.

The next step could be the development of a programme for warhead destruction underpinned by bilateral verification procedures. The United States and Russian declaration of 1991 to withdraw and eliminate tactical nuclear weapons is important in this respect and should be reconfirmed and provided with a time-frame for implementation.

Norway has always held the view that reductions in nuclear weapons, and ultimately their total elimination, cannot be negotiated in a multilateral forum. The nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility for nuclear disarmament. Given the devastating effect of these weapons, however, the international community has a legitimate interest in being kept informed of the progress achieved. We should also be informed of any difficulties and challenges encountered in the nuclear disarmament process.

Norway has on several occasions advocated that the Conference on Disarmament should serve as an important forum on nuclear transparency in order to replace distrust with confidence and cooperation. A procedure for nuclear transparency in the Conference on Disarmament could give the nuclear-weapon States an opportunity to inform others both of the results achieved through unilateral and bilateral initiatives and of their nuclear policies. This would demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

In this spirit, we submitted, together with Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, a proposal last year to establish an ad hoc working group to study ways and means of establishing an exchange of information and views on efforts towards nuclear disarmament. This proposal has been widely accepted by the members of this Conference. My appeal to you today is that we now translate this support into action.

Today there are large amounts of weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched uranium that pose a serious problem in terms of safe and secure handling. Because of inadequate arrangements for the control and verification of such material, they represent a threat to global security. This state of affairs is having a negative impact on the nuclear disarmament process.

To ensure further and irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons arsenals, international assurances should be given that weapon-grade fissile material is no longer being produced. Assurances should also be provided that existing stockpiles are being brought properly under control with a view to net reductions. We therefore need a coherent strategy to develop an international framework for dealing with fissile material. Such a strategy should include four elements.

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

First, a ban on the future production of fissile material for weapons purposes is essential. Such a ban should be considered an integral and indispensable part of nuclear disarmament. I am very disappointed to see that the Conference on Disarmament has still not started negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), although there has been consensus on the importance and high priority of this issue for a long time.

Second, the amount of weapons-usable fissile material that is now surplus or in excess of military requirements is steadily increasing and represents a proliferation risk. We need to establish an international norm for States to deal with stockpiles of such material, in order to ensure that none of these stocks will be returned or diverted to weapon programmes. This norm would also ensure that the stocks are made secure from theft and sabotage and prevent harm to human health and the environment.

Third, highly enriched uranium produced for non-explosive purposes, such as fuel for the propulsion of naval reactors, also involves a risk of proliferation. This issue should be addressed by the international community with a view to improving safety and the control of such material.

Fourth, we believe in establishing voluntary measures that would increase transparency in relation to military inventories of fissile material. Norway has put forward a four-step proposal for increasing transparency and confidence-building measures for such holdings, through reporting, inspection and safeguard procedures. This would lead to agreed, monitored net reductions in these stockpiles.

The issues of stockpiles related to excess weapons material, highly enriched uranium for non-explosive purposes and military inventories should be included in an international process to be established in parallel with or independent of the FMCT negotiations in Geneva.

I would like once again to emphasize the success of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines. The process leading up to the Convention and its implementation is an example of the benefit to be gained from combining experience from practical work in the field with multilateral diplomacy. I am pleased to see that the Geneva communities have played a key part in this process. Geneva has, in consequence, become an international home for the Convention. The inter-sessional work of the Convention is taking place here, and the second meeting of States parties will be held here in September.

As a result of the work on the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines, more attention is being given to conventional weapons in general. Conventional disarmament is also important in safeguarding humanitarian and human rights concerns. Conventional weapons are the weapons that kill. More focus on these weapons reflects an increasing willingness to improve human security.

Last week the first preparatory meeting of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects took place in New York. This Conference will supplement the efforts and initiatives being made at the national and regional

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

levels. The first preparatory meeting was a disappointment, however. This may be an indication that the small arms issue is still not ripe for a global approach. The issue is a complex one and must be approached in a practical, pragmatic and realistic manner.

The Conference on Disarmament is in urgent need of reform. I am not suggesting that the present stalemate could have been prevented by a reform of the Conference. No organizational or procedural operations can change underlying political realities.

Certain political requirements should be met if the Conference is to play a crucial role in the years ahead. And the removal of certain procedural obstacles could help this forum operate more smoothly.

In our view, the further enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament continues to be imperative. The admittance of Ecuador, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Tunisia as members last year was a most welcome, but still very small step forward.

We have long held the view that any country wishing to become a member should be admitted. We cannot exclude others from what is frequently referred to as the sole multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. If we want to negotiate in the Conference on Disarmament with a view to universal application and adherence, we have to open up for universal participation, as we do in other multilateral forums.

The current rules of procedure and working methods have become obstacles to the proper functioning of the Conference. Any subsidiary body must be able to work until its task has been accomplished. It is equally difficult to see the justification for the consensus rule across the board. The removal of the consensus rule should be considered, at least for procedural matters. The adoption of the same agenda year after year following protracted negotiations adds to the image of the Conference on Disarmament as an institution that is unable to adapt to new realities and matters of real concern.

The Conference is now in its fourth year without having done any substantive work. Multilateral institutions are faced with an increasing scarcity of resources. This is a development Norway regrets - our commitment to multilateralism is strong. Many problems can only be dealt with at the multilateral level, especially as globalization proceeds.

But all countries will have to consider more and more carefully how resources are spent. This will also apply to the Conference on Disarmament. Questions will be asked whether money can be spent more wisely and issues dealt with more efficiently elsewhere.

We are living in a world that is undergoing dramatic changes and where more and more importance is being attached to the way we deal with security issues. Future security will depend on a combination of carefully balanced regional and global initiatives and measures. It will also depend on our continuing international cooperation in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

(Mr. Vollebaek, Norway)

Today the non-proliferation regime is under pressure for several reasons. We must use the forthcoming NPT Review Conference to rededicate ourselves to the commitments of 1995 and to a concrete programme of action for the coming years.

We are determined to do our utmost to maintain what we have already achieved. We are looking forward to the further strengthening of the non-proliferation regime also as a means towards eventual nuclear disarmament. We are equally committed to making the Conference on Disarmament an effective instrument geared to achieving concrete results. To do this we need reforms. Together, we must take these necessary steps if we are to enhance international security and stability.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway for his important statement and for his kind words of appreciation addressed to me.

As we are aware, Ambassador Erwin Hofer of Switzerland will soon leave this Conference, having been called to other important responsibilities by his Government. During his presidency of the Conference in February/March 1998, he was able to create a solid foundation for the decision taken by the Conference on its programme of work. He can also take pride in the fact that his strenuous efforts as Special Coordinator on the Expansion of the Membership of the Conference, and his quiet but efficient diplomacy, resulted in the decision taken by the Conference in August 1999 to admit five new members. I am sure you all join me in extending to him and his family our best wishes for the future. Ambassador Hofer, you have the floor.

Mr. HOFER (Switzerland) (translated from French): First of all, may I congratulate you on your assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. This is a particularly difficult task given the present circumstances. You have taken up your responsibilities in a remarkable fashion, thanks to those diplomatic skills so well known to all of us here in international Geneva.

This is the first time under your presidency and the last time in my current position that I speak as Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Conference on Disarmament and I am deeply honoured to do so after the statements of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Norway, with whom we have developed very close ties, and Ukraine, who holds a key position in terms of European security. These two statements, as well as the messages that have just been expressed on the occasion of International Women's Day, show the importance that the international community attaches to the Conference.

As I leave my post, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all those men and women who have supported me in my functions since February 1996. My thanks go to those colleagues and friends present in the room and also to those who have left Geneva before me. The list of persons whom I would like to thank would be too long but I would like, in particular, to express my appreciation to the delegations of Chile and South Africa, whose support was essential for Switzerland's accession in 1996 as a full member of the Conference on Disarmament. It was in this capacity that my country, together with Sweden and Syria, was part of the old Conference

(Mr. Hofer, Switzerland)

"troika" and served as President in 1998. It was that troika which, under the presidency of Syria, had succeeded in adopting an agenda, admittedly short lived, but which did contain a substantial programme of work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, as well as to their colleagues in the secretariat for their firm support of the cause of disarmament and their efforts to place the Conference finally on the path of substantive work, that is to say, negotiations.

We have not yet attained our goals but I can confidently state that, as representative of Switzerland, I have learned a great deal from this period with you. During my stay in Geneva, the Conference went through an extremely important phase with the conclusion of the negotiations of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, the CTBT.

For its part, Switzerland has been able to contribute to major advances in arms control in Geneva, in particular in relation to the Conference. Thus, in entrusting Switzerland with the task of coordinator on the expansion of its membership - the only operational outcome of the last session - the Conference is effectively seeking to expand its legitimacy. In parallel with its commitments within the Conference, Switzerland has opened two international centres in Geneva, the first on security policy, the second dealing with humanitarian mine clearance. Switzerland has put forward its candidature as host for the future body entrusted with ensuring compliance with the prohibition of biological weapons. Thanks to the concerted action of States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines, or the Ottawa Convention, an instrument of great importance in the humanitarian field and also in that of disarmament, having previously been without a home, is now anchored in Geneva. We should note also the new dimension added to the disarmament cause by the efforts to combat abuse of small arms, as Geneva is becoming one of the centres of gravity in this area.

It would not have been possible to obtain these results without the expertise and the negotiating skills that are found within this Conference. While the objectives reached in the past have favourably influenced the present, the question to be asked is: what does the future hold?

Regrettably, new negotiations have not yet begun in the Conference. The absence of a programme of work is certainly not due to any lack of commitment on the part of the presidency or the delegations. On the contrary, there is a firm will and sense of creativity among us and in this context I would highlight the efforts of Ambassador Dembri of Algeria. So far, however, this will has not been sufficient to get specific negotiations off the ground.

What then is behind the current stalemate? Its cause is undoubtedly to be found in the very nature of our work. We are facing far-reaching changes in the balance of forces and strategic constellations in a changing security environment. As diplomats, we are not in a position to transform our own zeal for negotiations into a lever that can change those realities. We are practising here the art of the possible, not the art of what is desirable. Our means of action are limited to the establishment of legal frameworks that seek, in the interest of

(Mr. Hofer, Switzerland)

humankind as a whole, to enhance the security of States or to make sure that strategic realities are more predictable and stable and pose less of a threat. In this respect, we endorse the thinking of the French writer Georges Bernanos, who asserted that we do not submit to the future: we make the future.

After benefiting considerably from the peace dividends following the cold war, the Conference must now face up to the new strategic constellations, the scope of which is still greatly underestimated. So far, these constellations have prevented the establishment of the necessary consensus for starting negotiations on a new disarmament treaty. Nonetheless, I am sure that the determination to reach consensus will prevail sooner or later. In the meantime, the Conference remains the one and only universal negotiating platform in the area of disarmament, even though its membership is still, to my regret, restrictive in nature. The Conference is also a forum for dialogue and transparency. In this context, I would refer to the very positive event related to nuclear issues that took place at the beginning of this week.

Of course, the period spent waiting and in consultations has become far too long but this has given us an opportunity to release resources for other important areas, for example, the negotiations under way to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention or the implementation of existing Conventions such as that on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines and, finally, for efforts to combat the abuse of small arms. These new stages in arms control are awaiting further impetus from all the delegations meeting here in this room.

As I leave Geneva, I am sure that I can rely on this zeal for consensus and I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your work. I have a personal stake in your success, given that my Government has now entrusted me with the post in Bern as head of the combined services of the international organizations, the United Nations and the disarmament bodies. In particular, I shall be dealing with preparations for the federal vote on Switzerland's membership of the United Nations , which will probably be held before the end of 2002. The more successful you are, the easier my own job will be, in facilitating dialogue and informing and raising awareness among the Swiss people and institutions of the achievements of the United Nations system.

Even though I will have left, I will remain close to you. Let me assure you that I will remain committed to the noble cause that you are defending here. Together with my successor, my colleagues at the Swiss Mission, the authorities of the canton and city of Geneva, we will do our very best to continue to provide for you an atmosphere conducive to positive results in the negotiations, as this is the central role of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador, for your statement and for the warm felicitations addressed to me. Ambassador Hofer, I know I have the Conference's consensus view when I say that you will be sorely missed.

That concludes my list of speakers for today. I see the distinguished representative of Pakistan. Ambassador, you have the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): For the past several weeks in the Conference on Disarmament my delegation has considered that the best contribution we could make to the chances of the success of this Conference was to keep silent! I would, however, wish to take this opportunity to say a few words, mainly in response to some of the remarks that have been made in the Conference today regarding the dangers in South Asia. But, first, may I take this opportunity to extend my warm felicitations to you, Mr. President, and to express the confidence, which is buttressed by shared memories of compatriotism as well as professional training, that you will guide this Conference to success - at least towards a successful direction.

It is also an auspicious occasion as this Conference is observing International Women's Day. We have listened very intently to the statement from the annual International Women's Day seminar, which was read to us so eloquently by our Secretary-General, Mr. Petrovsky. It is the hope of my delegation that, in future, this Conference will find it possible - perhaps even in an informal mode - to listen to the representatives of the international women's community in person.

The present period is not a good time for disarmament. The reasons for this are quite evident and have been stated in several statements in this hall, including those which have been made today. There has been a deterioration in the relationships between the great Powers. There have been setbacks for disarmament, for the CTBT, for nuclear disarmament, for the ABM Treaty, and there have been setbacks in our region of South Asia. My delegation welcomes the recognition contained in the statement made by the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine and Norway today about the dangers in South Asia. In particular, I would like to express our agreement about the need for what the Foreign Minister of Norway has termed "a separate arms control regime" for South Asia.

It may be recalled that, after the nuclear explosions in South Asia last year, when nuclear arms became a reality which we felt could not be reversed but could be contained, Pakistan proposed a strategic restraint regime for South Asia. This regime envisaged three elements: first, mutual nuclear weapons and delivery systems restraint; second, mutual conventional military restraint and confidence-building measures; and third, efforts to address and resolve underlying problems, principally the core dispute between the two countries over Jammu and Kashmir. Simultaneously, it was agreed to include an item on peace and security on the agenda for the bilateral talks between India and Pakistan, as a priority issue, together with the item on Kashmir. It is unfortunate of course that this bilateral dialogue has been broken off, a nuclear doctrine has been declared envisaging a triad of nuclear weapons forces, and the defence budget of our neighbour has been increased by 28 per cent, while Pakistan's has been decreased by 6 per cent.

The Foreign Minister of Norway has suggested that the NPT Review Conference should deal with regional issues in a more comprehensive and balanced manner, and that the package of regional measures should also include South Asia. Pakistan is not opposed to the NPT Review Conference considering measures to construct what the Foreign Minister of Norway has suggested - a separate arms control regime for South Asia. But such measures, we believe, cannot be developed without the participation of the States concerned. If the NPT Review

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

Conference is to deal credibly with the situation in South Asia, it should extend an invitation to Pakistan - and equally to India - to participate fully and equally in the discussion of the issues relating to South Asia. I can state here that Pakistan would respond positively to such an invitation. We would, however, not be in a position to accept or endorse ex parte decisions by any conference or any organ in the international community.

It should be recalled that resolution 1172 (1998) of the Security Council was adopted ex parte, without our participation. The Task Force on Asia was set up - again - without our participation. The consequence of those endeavours are there for all to see: a nuclear doctrine, a triad, nuclear weapons development, military defence budgets on the increase. None of the benchmarks of resolution 1172 are anywhere near realization, and that is not because of Pakistan. I would therefore urge that our friends in the international community should not make the same mistake. We believe that the international community needs to do two things: first, to engage the two parties concerned to promote nuclear restraint, to promote conventional restraint, to promote the resolution of the disputes which threaten peace in South Asia, and, second, to urge the two States to reopen and revive their dialogue, which contains the framework within which a separate arms control regime for South Asia envisaging mutual restraint can and should be built for a peaceful future for our peoples.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Munir Akram for his statement and for the warm remarks towards me, particularly the reference to our shared experiences and recollections and our common training to be officers and gentlemen.

Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor? I recognize the distinguished Ambassador of India, Ambassador Kunadi.

Ms. KUNADI (India): Mr. President, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to express the appreciation of my delegation in seeing you conduct our proceedings at an important juncture for the work of the Conference.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the women non-governmental organizations for the message on the occasion of International Women's Day, read out by the Secretary-General, Mr. Petrovsky, to which we listened with great attention. We have also listened with attention to the important statements made today in the plenary by the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Ukraine.

It was not my intention to take the floor today, but I have been compelled to do so by certain unwarranted remarks made by the delegation of Pakistan relating to the national budget of India and certain other elements. Our position on regional approaches to South Asia is well known and need not be repeated here. We do not believe that South Asia as a region lends itself to regional security formations. With regard to the Indian defence budget, however, I would like to say a few words and make the following comments.

(Ms. Kunadi, India)

I believe that the performance by Pakistan's Ambassador here obviously flows from the single-point obsession with India and constitutes yet another attempt to waste the precious time of this Conference by raising extraneous issues.

I would also like briefly to state the facts for the record. India's defence budget needs to be seen in the background of our long land border and coastline, island territories and exclusive economic zones, as well as the challenge of extensive cross-border terrorism, covert destabilization activities and mercenary activities. The progressive proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons in our neighbourhood over the last decade has added a new dimension to the security challenge faced by India. India's defence expenditure is guided solely by considerations of self-defence.

The fact of the matter is that India's budget allocation for defence has remained low since the mid-1980s and has consistently declined. Currently India's defence expenditure is around 2.7 per cent of the country's GDP. This is one of the lowest in the region and beyond. It is also low in comparison to our own defence expenditure, which has been 3.3 per cent of the GDP in 1987. Moreover, research and development accounts for only 5.3 per cent of the total defence allocations. This modest budget outlay for research and development substantiates the fact that India is not engaged in any nuclear or missile arms race.

In addition, in keeping with the constitutionally established democratic practice of our country, the annual budget of the central Government for the coming financial year was presented to parliament. This is an example of the open and transparent manner in which the defence expenditure is discussed and approved in the Indian democracy. The concepts of democracy and transparency are obviously not familiar to the delegation of Pakistan.

India's defence budget is formulated with a degree of transparency that is not evident in many countries in our region and beyond. As evidenced by India's regular participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, we are committed to strengthening the norm of transparency in defence expenditures and arms transfers at the international level, and would expect the same of others.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Kunadi, an old friend, for her statement and for the support she and the Indian delegation have been rendering me in my task, which is happily drawing to a close.

I recognize the distinguished representative of Pakistan. Ambassador Akram, you have the floor.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, my first intervention was not designed as a diatribe against India. I was seeking to reflect the situation and to respond to the statements that had been made here about the dangers in South Asia. So it was not my delegation which introduced the South Asian dangers. I believe that everybody realizes that the situation in South Asia is serious. I think a repetition by our Indian colleague that South Asia is not amenable to regional approaches is not convincing. We are part of this world and we believe

(Mr. Akram, Pakistan)

that the situation in South Asia does need to be addressed, and that was my purpose - to try and propose an outline of what Pakistan suggests should be done, and I think we have a reasonable and responsible approach to this issue. I trust and hope that the international community will soon be able to convince the Indian Government to stop its venom and aggression against Pakistan and to come back to the path of dialogue and consultations, which is essential for the promotion of peace and security.

If India wishes to advertise its democracy, I would urge it in the first place to implement democracy and transparency in Jammu and Kashmir. Let the people of Kashmir decide their future. They do not want to stay with India. Why do you hold them in bondage? Democracy starts at home. Please apply it in Jammu and Kashmir first and foremost.

Second, my distinguished colleague has argued that India's long border is a justification for its large military expenditures and for its army being the third largest in the world. I would just like to point out that almost all of this army, 1.5 million strong, is deployed against my country, a much smaller country, and therefore obliges us to expend a large part of our national resources on defence. This is something that can be changed, that can be reversed by India, and we are proposing that we should do so through dialogue. The increase in the defence budget of India, which my colleague has described as "modest", is equal to the entire defence budget of Pakistan - just the increase. So one can judge how we see this increase, especially as we gaze at Indian guns across our borders.

The PRESIDENT: If there are no other speakers, that will conclude my list of speakers for the day. I would now go on to making my concluding remarks, but before that, may I inform the Conference that I have received a letter from Ambassador Amorim of Brazil in which he shares with me the sad news of the passing away of a former and dear colleague, Ambassador Celso Antonio de Sousa e Silva. Ambassador de Sousa e Silva was one of the pioneer members of this Conference as reconstituted in 1979 and presided over its proceedings on two occasions, in 1979 and 1986. I am sure that all of you will join me in requesting Ambassador Amorim to transmit our heartfelt condolences to the family of Ambassador de Sousa e Silva.

With the approval of the Conference, I will now make a few concluding remarks.

As I lay down the office of the President of the Conference on Disarmament, I wonder if the brevity of its term does not also impede its effective discharge. For the incumbent, it certainly does compound the overall sense of intensity, and hence there is always a modicum of relief associated with its relinquishment, which is what I feel now.

Nonetheless the experience is stimulating, even exhilarating and also, I must add, enlightening. The intricacies and nuances, of postures and positions, can never be as perceptible as from the chair. Any process of learning leaves one with some thoughts, as this one has for me, which I should like to share with my colleagues. But I should be remiss if I did not, early in my remarks, pay a tribute to all of you, my peers. Despite the variety and diversity of interests among the membership, which is but natural when the most basic concept of security is

(The President)

concerned, each one that I have interacted with has sought to assist me. This is no small comfort, for in diplomacy interests may alter but friendships must survive. More is achieved by human relationships than is often given credit for. So thank you all. I owe to my predecessor Ambassador Harald Kreid a debt for being such a generous source of encouragement and to Secretary-General Petrovsky and Deputy Secretary-General Bensmail, as well as others in the secretariat, including our interpreters, warm gratitude for their support. To my successor, the delegation of Belarus, I wish the very best and assure them of my readiness to assist them in their task.

True, my endeavours have not found fruition in a programme of work. But you will recall that at the outset I had set myself modest goals. My aim has always been to point the way to our purpose, and to suggest a "step-by-step, brick-by-brick" approach to that end. In fact, the initiative which I circulated was designed to achieve just that. As you are aware, it entailed the appointment, for a limited time frame, of two coordinators, for nuclear disarmament and PAROS, accompanied by an agreed presidential statement suggesting a course of action leading to a programme of work. It had support from many, but my initiative did not result in a consensus. Views on it were shaped by perceived national self-interest, as indeed should be the case on it, a fact that I understand and respect. The chair can have no position of its own, but can only seek to try for convergence.

The result, however, is that we are back in the tunnel and the light at its end eludes us, although we know that it is there. Indeed, that is what had prompted my predecessors and myself to strive with a determination so relentless that, beside it, the persistence of Robert Bruce pales in comparison. But we draw solace from the axiom that no effort sincerely made is ever in total futility. We can only make progress incrementally even though our work, like a Gothic cathedral, can never be quite finished, but can still serve its purpose.

Member States in the Conference on Disarmament today are often very - at times too - far apart. To attempt to close that gap, as an esteemed colleague remarked to me, is akin to seeking "a bridge too far". It has often been said the Conference reflects existing global realities. Or is it that the Conference on Disarmament is out of tune with the real world? For how can it remain inactive while wars and violence across the world continue to kill and maim on such an enormous scale? How can it remain so silent in the humbling knowledge that over half a billion people in the world, who live on less than a dollar a day, spend it not only on food, clothing and shelter but also to buy guns and shells? How can it be at ease when a plethora of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and conventional, remain as potentials for our total annihilation? It is not that we are marching to a different drummer; we are not marching at all, and this immobility could, though I hope not, be at a horrendous price.

To the leaders of the world, therefore, let us make an ardent and fervent appeal. They should focus on the Conference on Disarmament, pay it more attention, in order to encourage, enthuse and energize us. Countries and peoples need this body. It must be more appropriately used. It has already demonstrated its capacity to function as a negotiating body in the not-so-distant past. I welcome the calls made today by the Ministers of Ukraine and Norway in this regard.

(The President)

For instance, the CTBT is an outcome of our work here. It gives me much pleasure to announce today that my own country, Bangladesh, which was one of its earliest signatories, has now formally ratified it.

There will always be aggression in human nature. There always has been. But the challenge before us is to tame these streaks and strains in us, to channel them away from being the cause of death and destruction, to transform them into a driving force for progress and prosperity. It is possible. It will never be an ideal world, but it can be made more liveable, more secure and more stable. A forum such as this, fashioned by our positive instincts and more humane values, can, and must, help. I thank you.

This concludes our business for today. If there are no other speakers, I shall adjourn the session. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 14 March 2000, at 10 a.m., under the presidency of Belarus.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.